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SASC

27 February 1973

WHITE HOUSE SUPPORT ITEM FROM OSR

SUBJECT : Soviet Aircraft Carrier

REFERENCE: *New York Times* Article

This morning's *New York Times* reveals for the first time in the press that the Soviets have probably started construction of their second aircraft carrier. The only direct evidence of this development is from the most recent satellite photography.

The article is generally correct in its statements of fact, but its estimative judgments tend toward overstatement. As the article states, the vertical and short takeoff aircraft, the RAM-G, has been tested on the Moskva helicopter carrier; the head of naval aviation was promoted in 1972; and the Soviets seem to be disappointed in the ASW capabilities of the two Moskva class ships. The article also correctly describes the RAM-G program and the dimensions of the new aircraft carrier.

The *Times* quotes a prediction that there may be 3 of the new carriers in 5 years and about 12 in 10 years. The first carrier is expected to enter service by 1975,

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and the second by 1978. A third carrier could be under construction by 1978, but not operational. The estimate of 12 carriers by 1983 is excessive, even if the USSR does choose to continue building this class and steps up the priority of the program.

Finally, the article states the new carrier may accommodate 30 to 40 jets and 30 to 40 large helicopters at one time. This considerably exaggerates the ship's capacity. The carrier could carry as many as 30 to 40 jets or a comparable number of helicopters, but not simultaneously. Its hangar deck, for example, can accommodate an estimated 20 to 25 RAM-G aircraft, or about 15 RAM-Gs and 10 helicopters, or a combination of the two. Any additional aircraft would have to be carried on the open flight deck. The Soviets have not followed this practice with the Moskva class helicopter carriers, but might with the new carrier. About 10-15 RAM-G aircraft might be carried on deck without unacceptably hampering flight operations.

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